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PURCHASING PROBLEMS

A brief, factual roundup of production, supply and price trends.

BY W. G. REAVES
Assistant Purchasing Agent

Most of you recall, no doubt, a well known proverbial statement, used by a certain news commentator in the beginning of his nightly news forecast, over the period of war years, "There's bad news tonight—ah yes."

This same statement will apply in many cases to subjects which will be brought out this week in this column. However, lots of dark clouds have silver linings and there are a few linings in some of our dark clouds.

Labor Situation

It is reported that for the first time in 13 years, unions are on the defensive. This doesn't mean that strikes are over, by all means. Strikes will continue, but there are forces at work within the labor movement to dampen strikes.

Public sentiment over the recent rail strike frightened the union leaders. The public mustn't expect too much too soon, nevertheless, the turn is hopeful. The fewer strikes, the more up trend in the production field. This means more supplies and equipment sooner.

Price Control

At present it looks as if OPA is on its last legs. A new bill will evidently be passed which may or may not be an important improvement over OPA. The final bill will, in all probability have a decontrol formula. Decontrol of manufactured goods, it is reported, will be in the hands of a three-man board, while the decontrol of food prices will be in the hands of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Subsidies will be greater trimmed down, starting soon. Most prices will rise, sharply, during the last months of the year. Food prices are likely to go up another 15 percent, on the average. Coffee, for example, will rise approximately five cents a pound.

Sugar, a very scarce item, is expected to rise, slightly in price. Food prices will stay high throughout most of next year. Slightly higher freight rates are anticipated, probably around 5 to 7 percent.

(Continued on page three)

Graham Advocates 10-Year Program For County Roads

A 10-year secondary road improvement program to surface-treat and make all-weather at least 30,000 of North Carolina's 489,000 miles of county roads has been advocated by Chairman A. H. Graham of the State Highway and Public Works Commission.

Speaking before the North Carolina Certified Public Accountants' convention here recently, the chairman said such a program would pave approximately 2,500 miles of dirt roads a year in an effort to meet the "growing need" for a complete, all-weather secondary road system.

"The secondary road system has not been given proportionate attention," he asserted, "as economic changes made it necessary." He described improvement of secondary roads as "most vital" now.

The commission has "a real determination to accomplish a balanced system of primary and secondary system of highways for

(Continued on page three)

June 25 Letting Gets 42 Low Bids

Low bids on 42 of 52 road projects opened to letting June 25 totalled \$4,740,389.74 and covered 250 miles of roads, Chief Highway Engineer W. Vance Baise has announced.

Awarding of bids were to be considered at a meeting of the Commission in Raleigh yesterday. Details of the awarding will be printed in the next issue of North Carolina Highways & Public Works.

Baise expressed the opinion that no more major lettings would be held this year. There were only 112 bidders on 52 projects at this letting and 10 projects received no bids. Eight received only one bid.

"Contractors seem more interested now in heavy grading work than anything else," the highway engineer said, pointing out that a Davidson county project on U.S. 70 and 29 received eight roadway bids and three structures bids.

Counties having projects which received no bids included Perquimans, Yadkin, Alleghany, Wilkes, Caldwell, Watauga, Surry (two) and Forsyth.

ORIGIN-DESTINATION TRAFFIC SURVEY HELD AT HIGH POINT

The Passing Parade

Here are some sidelights on the traffic flow survey held on U.S. 29 north of High Point recently:

Grinning driver of soft drink truck giving bottle of pop to perpiring High Point traffic cop as driver entered line . . . ex-GI interviewer propping his foot on running board of two-star general's car and obviously enjoying questioning the officer . . . a crowd of small-fry perched on a nearby sign watching the swirl of activity . . . Negro driver of dump truck explaining to interviewer " . . . but I was just going to dinner . . . " and being told that this was just a traffic survey, not a pinch . . . sun-burned city policeman munching on huge slab of coconut pie as he watched the flow of traffic . . .

Trucks, sedans, convertibles, station wagons and sleek touring cars gliding by in a moving cross-section of North Carolina's mobile population . . . trucker leaning out of his cab to inform a state patrolman, "No likker this time, mister." . . . hot interviewer, wearing GI shoes, cooling his weary feet in a puddle of muddy water . . . a sliced watermelon on a nearby fruit stand looking very delicious to the hard working survey personnel as they stood in the baking hot sun . . .

A woman in a white bathing suit gesticulating with her cigaret as she talked with an interviewer, while her two children, also clad in swim togs, watched silently . . .

(Continued on page four)

Emergency Money

Assistant Director R. G. Deyton of the Budget Bureau has announced that emergency salaries for state employees will be continued through the fiscal year 1946-47.

The law provides that the salaries be continued if funds are available, he said, and "funds are available and the emergency salaries will be paid monthly starting in July just as they have been paid during this fiscal year."

He added that there would be no change in the method of handling the emergency salaries.

City Authorities Cooperating with Division of Statistics and Planning to Make Study of Traffic Flow Problems.

High Point—An origin-destination traffic survey is underway here conducted by the division of statistics and planning of the state highway and public works commission to determine traffic demands for the city.

City authorities are cooperating with highway officials to stop motorists briefly on all major roads leading in and out of the city for this information.

The smooth-working outfit of the division of statistics and planning opened its local survey June 17 and was scheduled to close its study of traffic flow into and around High Point next week.

The origin-destination survey, designed to provide accurate information for future route and highway construction planning, has been made in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, Goldsboro, Durham, Winston-Salem, and Reidsville.

Here's how the survey works:

An outfit consisting of from 3 to 12 interviewers, city policeman, state highway patrolman and traffic engineers is set up just outside High Point on a road carrying at least 200 cars a day.

"Slow," "stop" and "traffic station" signs inform motorists before they reach the station what they may expect. The drivers stop at one end of the line formed by the policeman and interviewers standing on the white line in the middle of highway.

A printed card addressed "To The Driver" tells motorists that the highway department is only seeking "information on traffic movements in this vicinity in order that we may best plan highway and street improvements to serve this community." No attempt is made to take names or license numbers and the interviews rarely last over one minute.

The interviewer asks where the driver is going, where he began his trip, does he plan to go beyond High Point, what route will he use and if he plans to stop in the city where will he stop.

(Continued on page three)

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Published semi-monthly by the State Highway and Public Works Commission in the interest of its employees and other citizens who are interested in the activities falling under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Sent free upon written application.

COOPERATION

The 8,000 employees of the North Carolina Highway and Public Works Commission are plenty busy. The end of hostilities brought a five-year backlog of work down in a grand rush upon every unit of the state's largest department.

Highway personnel, handicapped with serious shortages of material, labor and equipment, are faced with a maximum of maintenance and construction work. Millions of dollars will be spent this year in an attempt to return the state's primary and secondary road system to somewhat normal condition.

Prison officials and employees, also crippled by shortages, are striving to regain the prison system's peacetime efficiency. Most able-bodied prisoners are working in road gangs. Other are operating prison and camp industries, raising and handling food-stuffs for the camps or some other type of work.

There is little time for passing of general information between the varied units of this vast organization. Most of the widely separated sections know little of the work accomplished by other sections.

That is where the North Carolina Highways & Public Works figures in the picture. This little four-page newspaper should keep highway and prison people informed on the work and accomplishments of their department. It should prove a valuable link between

members of a great organization scattered from the sand dunes of the outer banks to the cloudy peaks of the Great Smokies.

Field personnel should know what is happening in the Raleigh headquarters, and the employees here want to know how things go in the various divisions and districts. There should be an interchange of ideas and suggestions between divisions. The North Carolina Highways & Public Works can make that possible.

The success of this publication will depend largely on one thing—COOPERATION. An organization as huge and varied as the highway department cannot be "covered" by one or two persons. It's just too big.

With a little help from division and district engineers, division prison supervisors, mechanics, prison guards, stenographers and other personnel the NCH&PW can expand into a readable, fact-filled publication guaranteed to be preferred reading.

Officials here in Raleigh have been extremely cooperative. A similar response from the field would aid greatly. Be assured that every effort will be exerted to make this newspaper a thoroughly accurate, informative and useful publication for all employees of the Commission.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The State Highway Commission is making encouraging progress in the improvement of roads in North Carolina. This is made clear by the Commission's announcement that it will let bids on June 25 for an estimated \$4,853,200 in renovation, broadening and paving of 299 miles of farm-to-market highways.

The letting of contracts for these new projects will bring the total expenditures for approved and proposed postwar road betterment in the State

to \$23,000,000, since \$18,500,000 in contracts already has been allocated since October, 1945. This represents the greatest Highway Commission activity in any similar period since the big primary road building program of 1921-24.

State Highway Engineer W. Vance Baise has checked the record and finds that at no time in the history of the Highway Commission have so many improvement and construction contracts been let in the same length of time as have been during the last nine months.

The June 25 letting, he says, will virtually wind up the Highway Commission schedule of construction and betterments, "at least for some time."

This does not mean, of course that the Highway Commission will cease to plan for much needed improvements on numerous highways and farm-to-market roads that will still be badly in need of repair after the present program is completed. Its job is one that never will be completed. So long as the people pay taxes to maintain a large highway construction fund, the task of the Commission will be to determine where this fund can be spent to best serve the people of the Commonwealth.

One phase of the highway development that the Commission should always keep in mind is the proper maintenance of roads over which school buses must operate. These roads are so essential to the efficient operation of the public school system that the Commission must constantly be on its guard to see that they are not neglected.

The Winston-Salem Journal.

The Old Lancaster Turnpike, which ran from Philadelphia to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was the first macadam road to be built in the United States. It was built by the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Company, its charter being granted April 9, 1792. The road was completed in 1794.

No Plates

Non-delivery of long-awaited addressograph plates again slowed up mailing of this issue of the North Carolina Highways & Public Works.

The new, fully-automatic addressing machine has been delivered and installed but cannot be operated until plates arrive.

Addressing time should be cut from six days of hand-addressing to one hour by the addressograph when the plates arrive.

Do You Know?

1. What former county official was voted an honorary life membership in the American Road Builders' Association at its convention in January of this year?

2. What is an easy way to convert speed in miles per hour into feet per second?

3. Advertising by the various states has become big business. About how much do you think will be spent this year by the 40 states that now advertise?

4. The first reported sale of a passenger car in this country took place in 1896. When was the first motor truck sold?

5. To what use were highway tunnels put during the war in France and Italy?

6. China has initiated a 5-year road-building program. How many miles of new construction is hoped for?—From Better Roads.

For answers, see page four.

Construction In South Is Growing

Southern construction at the end of the first five months of 1946 totalled \$764,004,000, or more than 56 percent ahead of the value of contracts awarded for work in the south during the same period last year.

According to Construction Magazine, the increase occurred despite the scarcities of materials, labor difficulties and the fact "that renewed federal restrictions have changed the complexion of construction from a general activity involving all types of work to mostly residential work, highway and engineering projects."

Industrial construction, however, the publication said, occupied the highest position in the five month statistical picture. Total for this type of work was \$189,463,000, with private building ranking a close second at \$174,381,000.

Highway construction work was listed at \$156,647,000 and heavy engineering at \$143,723,000. Highway activity this year was almost four times that for the same period last year.

Safety Problems Are Studied At Conference Here

A state-wide traffic safety conference was held in Governor Cherry's office yesterday "for the purpose of bringing to North Carolina a program adopted at President Truman's National Highway Safety Conference in Washington May 8-10."

The Governor said the state's high accident toll "is not just a malady, it's an epidemic. If the staggering highway losses of life, limb and property came from some unknown disease germ, the state would be alarmed from border to border, quarantines would be established, hospital and medical forces would be mobilized by the thousand.

"But are lives any less important because they are taken by carelessness, by drunken driving, by excessive speed, or by any other causes of accidents? . . ."

Among the state leaders attending the conference were Chairman A. H. Graham of the State Highway and Public Works Commission and James S. Burch, engineer of statistics and planning for the commission.

GRAHAM ADVOCATES

(Continued from page one) the future development of North Carolina," Graham said.

The demand for better county roads has resulted from "a marked change in the rural life of North Carolina," he continued. Agriculture has swung from "basic" crops of cotton, tobacco, corn and wheat which could be brought to market when weather conditions permitted.

Farm products produced today on the farm, such as chickens, pigs, milk and truck farming, must be taken daily to market, he explained, and also require delivery of more manufactured goods from town to the farm. Distributors of goods must make daily deliveries of feed and other items over county roads.

The "vital need" for good secondary roads has been hampered by deterioration during the war years, floods that washed out 2389 county bridges and the worst winter in many years.

Graham told the CPA delegates of the many material, labor and equipment difficulties facing the highway department "not as an apology . . . but as a report on the state highway department to you."

He cited the rising expense of road building and construction, and noted that "it takes more than money to build roads now."

North Carolina, the first state in

the south to let road contracts after the end of hostilities, has let \$19,000,000 in contracts since that time, he added. The June 25 letting boosted the total to approximately \$23,000,000.

The secondary road stabilization program beginning in July should make all-weather 2,000 miles of dirt roads this year, the chairman said. Lack of equipment, labor and materials were listed as principle reasons for inability to complete more.

He described briefly the history of the road movement in North Carolina which has resulted in 60,000 miles of roads for the state.

State Treasurer Charles Johnson, another featured speaker at the meeting, mentioned the state highway fund in his talk on state finances. The fund, he said, was in "good shape." and the principle of the debt would be provided for by 1951.

He related the history of the highway fund and said the issuance of short term bonds had assisted in making the fund work properly. The entire highway debt could be retired now because of the present surplus of funds, but he warned that the cost of present road maintenance and construction would prevent any such action.

TRAFFIC SURVEY

(Continued from page one)

Counter Keeps Check

The survey is held from 6 a. m. to 12 midnight on each road. On heaviest roads, only one lane is operated at a time; traffic on the other lane being slowed but not stopped. A "counter" operating a battery of tabulators keeps check on the number of vehicles traveling over the road during the 18-hour period. His hourly count includes the number of passenger cars, trucks and busses passing by the station each hour in each direction. His tally is verified by automatic machine counters.

W. D. White, resident engineer supervises the survey, collects all interview forms each hour, and the data is taken to a temporary office in a local school building where the information is examined and prepared for punch card tabulations.

Prior to the survey, James S. Burch, engineer of statistics and planning for the state highway commission, Traffic Engineer Robert Burch, Commissioner George W. Kane of Roxboro, T. A. Burton, Division Engineer, and White attended a meeting of High Point leaders to discuss and explain the purpose and working of the survey.

Streets Inefficient

J. S. Burch told the group that

Drive Safely.

Engineers Attend Barbecue At Club

A number of highway department engineers attended the annual barbecue of the Raleigh Engineers Club held recently at the Tar Heel Club near the City.

Bingo and other games were played by the engineers, their wives and guests as part of the social program for the evening. Forty-nine highway engineers are members of the club. J. L. Norris was a member of the barbecue committee. F. H. Brant is secretary-treasurer of the group.

Among those participating in the stunts were T. C. Hartman, Ivan Hardesty and J. O. Litchford.

"long before Pearl Harbor, it was generally realized that city streets were the most inefficient portions of the highway transportation network. Delays caused by congestion, cross streets, parking troubles and pedestrians were highly objectionable; and these delays were having adverse effect on downtown property use and property value.

"For the past two years, we have been making origin-destination traffic surveys at our larger towns, since these are the 'key-stones' in route planning and highway construction planning. Traffic is already above its pre-war level. Further traffic growth from year to year is inevitable.

"Private building operations are every day constricting the opportunities for highway development in and near cities. Traffic improvements in the cities themselves can be done properly and logically if a master plan of development is first adopted.

"The federal highway act of 1944 earmarked substantial sums, to be matched by state funds, for improvements on the federal-aid highway system inside the cities, whether on the interstate highway system or not. This money will become available immediately after the war, and allocations have been made by states for the first postwar years.

"Not only is the need for such improvement apparent, but it is important that these projects be timed to absorb manpower released at the end of the war emergency and to stimulate business during the reconversion period.

William Phelps Eno, internationally known authority on highway traffic regulation, died at 87 on December 3, 1945. Mr. Eno was the originator of one-way streets, traffic rotaries and the general use of safety islands.

The Luxemburg Palace was the last Nazi holdout in Paris.

PURCHASING PROBLEMS

(Continued from page one) cent higher, covering commodities only. Rough estimate of average price rise in 1946 is 20 percent above 1945.

Delivery Uncertainties

Repeated statements, during recent months, that little unemployment was developing, made us wonder what was happening to the end product. With a large labor force at work, they must be making something. The phrase "filling the pipe line" has became pretty thin.

Facts are that for a time inventories were being built up considerably, in anticipation of a strong inflationary trend. When this trend showed itself to be a controlled groundswell upward, inventory hoarding became less prevalent. At this point, the series of strikes cut heavily into production and created a disjointed supply outlook.

Currently the story seems to be that a shortage of pig iron and steel traceable to the steel strike is responsible for shortages of many other items in construction. Whether for reasons of labor or material difficulty, the problem of obtaining assured deliveries is likely to remain with us for sometime to come. This is notwithstanding the advent of a new high level of production.

Procurement

Getting firm price and delivery guarantee is more difficult at this time than at any period since the end of the war. In some cases, bids received fill only 50 percent of the requirements and sellers generally are reluctant to quote firm prices on future deliveries.

In fact, only about 40 percent of bids now are on a firm price basis and this is only on items that are to be delivered from stock immediately. The majority of prices, where there is a price ceiling, are flush with the ceiling, but there are isolated instances, where the price may be below allowed OPA ceiling.

In such instances, the considerations are usually that the seller is in a particularly favorable position in manufacturing the item and is anxious for a volume order.

Biggest Budget

Georgia's State Highway Board has approved a \$32,000,000 road building program for 1946, the largest annual construction outlay in the state's history.

More than half the construction costs will be borne by the federal government since the state had approximately \$9,000,000 in federal funds held over since construction was stopped by the war, and the state will get \$11,500,000 annually for the next three years from the federal postwar road program.

Federal Highway Assistance Work Gains In Volume

The Federal-aid highway program gained in size during May as the volume of road work placed under contract continued to rise.

State highway departments let 425 contracts in May for federal-aid projects that will cost \$58,166,360, as compared with a total of 392 contracts awarded in April for work costing \$55,932,506, according to reports received by the Public Roads Administration from its field offices.

The number of contracts awarded for federal-aid projects has increased each month since the beginning of the year. During the five-months period from January 1 to May 31, a total of 1,230 contracts were let for approximately \$185,900,000 worth of improvements on the federal-aid system. At the end of May, a total of 68 contracts for work costing \$12,581,000 were under consideration.

In the same period, state highway departments rejected 329 bids for Federal-aid road work, without action by the Public Roads Administration. Fifty-six bids were rejected as a result of PRA's refusal to concur in the award of contracts. Refusal of concurrence was prompted by high bidding.

Reports of progress in the development of the federal-aid secondary road program showed a total of 2,851 projects programmed as of May 31 for improvements on 12,046 miles of roadway at an estimated cost of \$217,109,6891. The federal contribution will amount to \$109,783,343. Of these projects, 1,334 miles costing \$33,963,000 are under construction.

Traffic Report

North Carolina's traffic volume during April and May rose to the greatest high since the 1941 defense period, James S. Burch, engineer of statistics and planning for the state highway and public works commission, has reported.

Traffic volume data was based on reports of 20 full-time, automatic, electric eye traffic recorders.

Motor vehicle registration reached an all-time high for May, Burch said, despite the new car shortage and mortality rate of old vehicles.

"The May gasoline tax report established a new all-time high," he continued. "This was due not only to the high traffic level, but the fact that old vehicles are burning more gasoline per mile than normally."

Answers To "Do You Know?" (Page three)

1. President Harry S. Truman, who has for years been a group member of the county highway officials' division of the association from Jackson County, Missouri.

2. Multiply the speed in miles per hour by 1.5 to approximately feet per second. For instance, 60 m.p.h. is equivalent to 90 feet per second. It's something to think about when braking a car at high speed.

3. Appropriations for 1946 and the 1945-47 biennium reach the total of \$8,939,229. Most of this is coming from the state's general funds, although at least six states use highway and road funds.

4. In the same year 1896 to a department store in Providence, R. I.

5. The Germans converted highway tunnels into factories making war materials. A tunnel on a superhighway leading out of Paris was unused because the highway had not been completed, so the Germans took it over for torpedo-assembly operation. Tunnels on a highway running along the west shore of Lake Garda, in northern Italy, were converted into aircraft-engine plants.

6. Construction of 118,430 miles of new highways is the goal of the Chinese national government's new 5-year roadbuilding program. Main roads will be under the control of the central government; secondary roads will be administered by the provinces.

Toll Law Upheld

Constitutionality of a 1943 Illinois law creating a State Superhighway Commission to build toll highways was upheld in an opinion handed down by the Illinois Supreme Court.

The ruling cleared the way for the commission to go ahead again with plans to build high-speed toll highways between Chicago and St. Louis, Chicago and Rockford, and East St. Louis to the Indiana state line.

The high state court reversed the Sangamon County Circuit Court, which had found the act invalid on the grounds it delegated "unlimited and arbitrary" power to the five commissioners.

The Supreme found that the Commission's powers to select routes and build highways was "ministerial" and not a delegation of legislative functions.

Under the statute the commission is empowered to issue revenue bonds for construction and operation of toll superhighways.

Drive Safely.

Nine Prisoners Escape During Period June 1-16

A total of nine prison escapes were reported during the period June 1-16, according to Prison Director Clyde O. Robinson.

This equalled the same number of escapes for the previous two weeks May 16-31, but fell far below the 22 escaping during May 1-16.

Only two camps—Caldwell 8903 and Buncombe 1002 reported two escapes. A total of eight captures were listed during the period.

Central Prison, long a holder of a three star rating, dropped from that classification when an honor grade prisoner walked off the Highway Building detail in Raleigh.

Ratings for all camps and prisons for June 1-16 were

Three-Star Rating

Women's Prison, Raleigh, and all other camps with the exception of those listed below.

Two-Star Rating

Central Prison, Granville 504, Durham 503, Edgecombe 107 and Martin 111.

One-Star Rating

Buncombe 1002 and Caldwell 803.

List Of Veterans Returning Grows

The return of three veterans to employment with the North Carolina State Highway & Public Works Commission has been reported.

Alonzo Sumrell of Gransboro and Wilford Thomas Sawyer of New Bern have returned to work in division two, district two as mechanics.

Sumrell served in the Navy from Oct. 16, 1942 until Aug. 4 1944. Sawyer served in the ETO with the third Army as a first lieutenant.

H. C. Harriss of Route 3, Elizabeth City, has returned from Army service to work in the first division.

Freedom And Security

The initiative and genius of a free people knows no bounds or limitations. Sometimes it becomes necessary to choose between freedom and security. There should never be any hesitation in making that choice. Likewise there should be no hesitation in deciding between a government which offers you security and a government which guarantees to you liberty—the slave has security. The man in prison has security. Both will be provided with food, raiment and shelter, but who wants to be a slave or a prisoner?"—Senator Clyde Hoey.

PASSING PARADE

(Continued from page one)

traffic survey engineers checking reports every hour as the statistics poured in . . . most vehicles traveling short distances into and near High Point, except one interviewer who found his first four cars enroute from Maryland to Alabama, Reidsville to Charlotte, New Jersey to Mexico City and Greensboro to Charlotte . . . the average running nine local trips to one long distance trip, however . . .

Trucks of every description hauling fish, roofing, flue lining, soft drinks, furniture, cement, cloth, machine parts, vegetables, washing machines, cattle and other varied items . . . traveling salesmen of nationally known firms in dusty sedans packed with samples of their wares . . . housewives in summer frocks, appearing just a little startled by the swift efficiency of the survey . . .

Heaviest flow of traffic passing the station between 5-6 p. m., with the counter recording 425 passenger automobiles, 894 trucks and 12 buses . . . Motorist from Oregon passing through on way to Texas via Florida . . . Asked purpose of trip, he replied with a grin: "Just touring" . . .

Interviewers working in summer rain at night with light from lanterns reflecting off their rain slickers . . . Keeping up their cheerful, "Good Evening, this is a traffic survey . . ." to all motorists, despite drenching showers and soggy questionnaire pads.

Potter To Guide Agent Convention

J. M. Potter, purchasing agent for the State Highway and Public Works Commission, was scheduled to preside at a business session of the Carolinas-Virginia Purchasing Agents Association summer meeting in Asheville today and tomorrow. He is president of the organization which is an affiliate of the National Association of Purchasing Agents with a membership more than 10,000 purchasing agents throughout the United States.

The lady of the house was entertaining her bridge club when the patterning of tiny feet was heard on the stairs. She raised her hand for silence.

"Hush," she said softly, "the children are going to deliver their goodnight message. It always gives me such a feeling of reverence to hear them—listen!"

There was a moment of silence—then shyly, "Mama, Willie found a bedbug."